

# Easter in Salem

*By Wm. A. Blair*



THE FIRST  
EARLY EASTER MORNING SERVICE  
ON THE  
HERRNHUT GOD'S ACRE

April 13, 1732

*"In the young men's meeting on April 12th we were of one mind that on Easter Day we would go to our Resting Place upon the Hutberg before the rising of the sun; which was done before four o'clock on the morning of the 13th. Later, when we had spent an hour and a half in singing on the Hutberg, and had returned, a song and prayer service was held in the Saal." (Croeger, Volume I, page 224.)*

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"Tomb, thou shalt not hold him longer;  
Death is strong, but life is stronger;  
Stronger than the dark,—the light;  
Stronger than the wrong,—the right;  
Faith and Hope triumphant say  
Christ will rise on Easter day."

—*Phillips Brooks*

Silent is the great visitor-thronged  
city.

"Night's black mantle covers all alike  
'Tis the witching hour of night;  
Orbed is the moon and bright,  
And the stars,—they glisten, glisten,  
Seeming with bright eyes to listen,—  
For what listen they?"

Perhaps for the sweet song the  
angels sang; or, for the glad cho-  
rales that usher Easter in. Some two  
short hours since

"The lonely moon  
From the slow-opening curtains of the  
clouds  
Walked in beauty to her midnight  
throne,"

the well-trained groups, with ancient horns, stand here and there throughout the city's bounds. Suddenly at the appointed hour, as if with one accord, the sacred hymns peal forth almost beneath the waiting windows of each home, gently yet solemnly calling all from sleep.

“Hark! the numbers soft and clear  
Gently steal upon the ear”—

from near at hand, from neighboring square,

“Now heard far off, so far as but to seem  
Like the faint exquisite music of a dream.”

In every home, despite the hour, all now arise, then quietly to the tranquil square proceed, o'er which the tall church steeple casts a benediction, constant, tender, sweet.

“Night's black mantle still covers all  
alike,”

but every eye is fastened on that old church door. Slowly, quietly, gently, now at last it opens wide. The

host of ushers, thronging choir  
and all the pastors of that faith,  
from all the province round, appear  
and disappear into the gathered  
throng. A moment later, then, a  
form erect, in priestly garb, a strik-  
ing face, a "good gray head which  
all men know," as if by magic cen-  
tres in the scene. Upon the portal  
all alone he stands, framed as it  
were in a great picture there. It is  
the Bishop, well beloved,

"Whose preaching, but far more his  
practice wrought  
A living sermon of the truths he taught."

His voice, so clear, so marvelous,  
so sweet, sounds forth in tones of  
triumph and of joy that all may  
hear, the greeting apostolic,

"The Lord is risen!"

Oh, there's something in that  
voice and in that call that touches  
every heart and brings in thunder  
tones the hearty glad response,

"The Lord is risen indeed!"

Soon the great procession forms,  
and at its head "his office sacred,  
his credentials clear," the Bishop  
leads it on. In his footsteps "fol-  
low fast" one of the bands, and  
others, finding places here and  
there, play antiphonally as they  
march. Through hallowed avenue  
and fair, the vast throng slowly  
makes its way, until a welcoming  
gate is found o'er which a sweet  
inscription ever says,

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Beneath the arch the Bishop now  
has passed and in the centre of "the  
field and acre of our God," he takes  
his stand.

From every blossom-covered  
grave there springs a fragrant, rich  
perfume,

"And the fresh air of incense-breathing  
morn

Doth wooingly embrace it."

Night's candles have almost  
burned out, the day begins to break  
neath the "opening eyelids of the

morn," and, in the east, a mellow light a promise brings, that soon the radiant sun, "God's crest upon his azure shield," will flame again upon the forehead of the morning sky. On what a scene, that none can e'er forget, will its first rays descend! More than thirty thousand, in His image made, from many a city, town, and state, are standing, waiting there, in silence grave and in deep reverence wrapt. None fail to hear the Bishop's words. None can forget that service there. All feel the thrill of this great call before the benediction comes,—

"Glory be to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life! He was dead and behold He is alive evermore; And he that believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Glory be to Him in the church which waiteth for Him, and in that which is around Him from everlasting to everlasting. Amen."

But why stand you silent there? The multitude has gone, the service o'er.





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